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Excursion.

City History Club of New York.

By Frank Bergen Kelley

No. 4. Central Park to Van Cortland
Park.





Class _____

Book _____



EXCURSION
PLANNED FOR THE
CITY HISTORY CLUB
OF
NEW YORK

BY

FRANK BERGEN KELLEY, A. M., Ph. D.

No. IV—CENTRAL PARK TO VAN CORTLANDT PARK (Revised).



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23 W. 44th Street.

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THIS first appeared as a " Bicycle Excursion " and may still be taken awheel if one does not object to frequent dismounting and following poor roads between 180th Street and Kingsbridge.

As most parties prefer to go *via* the cars or on foot, it has been thought best to arrange the Excursion in six sections, each complete in itself.

When the projected electric line between Ft. George and Kingsbridge is finished much walking may be avoided.

The original Excursion has been thoroughly revised and additional matter inserted, although the ground covered remains the same.

Owing to differences of authorities, several points are open to criticism. The writer will be pleased to receive any additions or corrections, especially if authorities be quoted.

EXCURSION No. IV.

(The figures correspond to those on maps at the end.)

SECTION I. UPPER CENTRAL PARK AND MOUNT MORRIS PARK.

Enter Central Park at the "Girls' Gate," 102d Street and Fifth Avenue, and follow East Drive to

1. *McGown's Pass Tavern*, near the site of the Revolutionary tavern where Washington decided to evacuate New York in 1776. The old Post Road ran through this path, branching just north, one road continuing to Harlem, the other, "Harlem Lane," running northwest to meet the Bloomingdale Road. Along this road the Americans were pursued by the British, September, 1776. (See Club Excursion No. V., with the story of Andrew McGown.)

Take path on the right to top of hill above Harlem Mere.
See remains of

2. *Fort Clinton*, an American redoubt strengthened by the British, whose lines reached the Hudson at 106th Street. See old cannon and mortar. This locality is sometimes called Mount St. Vincent from the convent formerly here located.
3. *Block House No. 1*, on the rocky bluff opposite "Warriors' Gate" (Seventh Avenue). This was one of four forts in 1812 guarding the roads from Hell Gate and the north. (See Lossing's "Field Book of the War of 1812," pp. 971-978).

Go north on Lenox Avenue to 120th Street and east one block to

4. *Mount Morris Park*, formerly known as Snake Hill, "under whose shadow Harlem was built," and where the Indian village of Muscoota was located. Here, in 1776, were American and, later, British works to command the Harlem. The *Fire Tower* is one of the last relics of the old Volunteer Fire Department.

Proceed through the Park to 125th Street, and west to St. Nicholas Avenue.

(NOTE.—In a cigar store at 264 W. 125th Street, near Eighth Avenue, may be seen a wooden statue of Washington which, it is claimed, stood on Bowling Green from 1792 until 1843. Day's Tavern, where Washington stopped in 1783, was near this corner.)

SECTION II. SCENE OF THE BATTLE OF HARLEM HEIGHTS.

5. *Point of Rocks*, 127th Street and Convent Avenue, site of American military outlook and redoubts, which extended along the ridge to the Hudson River. (See Map No. 1.)

Cross the "Hollow Way" (the valley between "Harlem Heights" and "Bloomingdale Heights") to

6. Block House No. 3 (War of 1812). (see 2 above), in Morningside Park, at Amsterdam Avenue and 123d Street.

Go south on Amsterdam Avenue.

7. *Tablet* on southeast corner of Columbia University buildings, erected by the Empire State Society to commemorate Forts Clinton, Fish and Laight, and other works of the War of 1812.

Go west on 116th Street.

8. *Columbia University*. See inscription on Library to commemorate "King's College," formerly on College Place and Warren Street.

Go through the grounds and out on the Boulevard.

9. *Tablet*, erected by the Sons of the Revolution, on University building, near 117th Street, marking the Battle of Harlem Heights, September 16, 1776. (See vol. 2 of "Historic New York" published by Putnam and Prof. Johnston's "Battle of Harlem Heights" published by MacMillan; Lossing's "Field Book of the Revolution," Vol. 2, p. 816; Wilson's "Memorial History of New York," Vol. 2; Stone's "History of New York," chap. VII., and "Memoirs Long Island Society," vol. 3.

10. *Grant's Tomb*. See Li Hung Chang's trees and bronze memorial to Gen. Grant, just north of the Tomb.

11. *Tomb of "An Amiable Child"* (St. Claire Pollock), buried here in 1797. It is said that the child lost its life by falling over a cliff near this spot.

12. "*The Claremont*" is one of the oldest houses in this neighborhood, and is said to have been built by a Tory who had to go into exile during the War of 1812.

See the new Viaduct built to connect with Washington Heights. The vicinity of the Fort Lee Ferry was originally known as "Matje David's Vly" (valley), where a rude ferry crossed the river.

Descend the hill and take Amsterdam Avenue car through old "Manhattanville," passing on the right the grounds of the Convent of the Sacred Heart.

SECTION III. "CARMANSVILLE."

13. *Hamilton Grange* (141st Street and Convent Avenue, next to the church) built by Alexander Hamilton as a country seat (1802) and named for his ancestral home. See old engraving of Hamilton in vestry room of St. Luke's Church adjoining. The *Thirteen* (gum) *Trees* planted by Hamilton (or his nephew) in honor of the thirteen States are two blocks above.

Go east on 145th Street to St. Nicholas Avenue (which runs a little west of the Boston and Albany Post Road laid out while Benjamin Franklin was Postmaster-General of the Colonies). "Breakneck Hill" (now almost level) was about 147th Street. Follow St. Nicholas Avenue to 152d Street.

14. *Ninth Milestone* (1769) in a private yard on the north side of 152d Street between St. Nicholas and Amsterdam Avenues.

Go west to Broadway, then north.

(The trip to Jeffrey's Hook and Fort Washington (SECTION IV) can be made with very little walking by taking the train from the foot of 152d Street to the next station. As trains run infrequently, secure a time-table of the Hudson River Railroad, 30th Street to Spuyten Duyvil.)

15. *Tablet*, representing Revolutionary works, erected by the Sons of the Revolution, in cemetery wall, west side of Broadway, between 152d and 153d Streets. Some claim this as the proper site of the Battle of Harlem Heights (see 9).
16. *Audubon House*, at the southwest corner of Audubon Park (foot of 155th Street) was the home of the great naturalist.

A sharp fight took place in this locality at the time of the capture of Fort Washington.

Go east on 155th Street, passing Audubon's monument.

17. *Trinity Cemetery*, within which may be seen the tombs of General Dix, Philip Livingston, J. J. Astor, Jumel and other distinguished men; also a cenotaph to President Monroe, whose body was removed to Virginia in 1858.
18. *The Mansell House* (built 1796) is near 157th Street on Amsterdam Avenue and was once occupied by O'Donnell, the Irish patriot.
19. *The Roger Morris (Jumel) Mansion*, 161st Street, near Edgecombe Avenue, built in 1758 by Colonel Roger Morris, of the British Army; occupied by Washington in 1776 and later by Knyphausen;

owned since the Revolution by Stephen Jumel (whose widow here married Aaron Burr in 1834), John Jacob Astor and General F. P. Earle. The house commands a fine view of the city below and of the upper Harlem. See the tablet erected by the Daughters of the American Revolution.

Southwest of the grounds, at 159th Street, are the historic "*Napoleon trees*" (Egyptian cypresses) sent to Bonaparte in 1815 by the Sultan of Egypt and given by him to Jumel, who set them in a circle around an artificial fish pond. Half of the circle is complete.

On the edge of the cliff at 158th Street, overlooking the Speedway, is a great hole in the rocks, said to have been a favorite Indian resort.

North of the Jumel Mansion, on 162d Street, is a rock where old inhabitants say Fitz Green Halleck composed his poem "*Marco Bozzaris*."

Take Amsterdam Avenue car to 175th Street, or the more romantic "*Aqueduct Path*," running under the cliffs along the Harlem to High Bridge. This walk may be reached from the Speedway at 155th Street or by several short cuts from Edgecombe Avenue east.

SECTION IV. WASHINGTON HEIGHTS.

20. *High Bridge*, over which is conducted the aqueduct of the first Croton water supply of New York (1842). See Morris Heights (just below New York University), where *Fort No. I/III* was located in the Revolution, and traces of which can still be seen.

Go west on 181st Street to Fort Washington Avenue.

21. *Fort Washington*, a stronghold of the Revolution, was built by Colonel Rufus Putnam. It was captured by the British November 16, 1776, and afterward called Fort Knyphausen. This was one of the highest points of land on Manhattan, about 181st-183d Streets. See one of the earth bastions in the James Gordon Bennett property 150 yards west of the road. It has been proposed to erect an arch to commemorate the brave defence. (See memoirs of the Long Island Society, Vol. 3. and Lossing's "*Revolution*," Vol. 2, pp. 816-827.)

(NOTE.—No. 22 may be omitted by pedestrians, it being nearly three-fourths of a mile distant.)

22. *Fort Tryon* was located just north, near the observatory, about 196th Street. Traces of a breastwork may be seen at the summer house below.

Descend from Fort Washington through the fields and *via* Bennett Lane to Boulevard Lafayette (the "French Boulevard"), and go south to the entrance to Fort Washington Park. Follow the path over the bridge, crossing the deep cutting of the "Dolly Varden" Railroad, the earliest line of the New York Central to enter the city, over which a few passenger trains and many freight trains still pass.

23. *Sunset Lane* meets this path from the south just before it crosses the bridge. *Cedar Point* is the projection into the Hudson toward the north. A fine view may be obtained from here.

After crossing the bridge, turn up the side path to the left and on the top of the hill see the

24. *Rifle Pits* used in the Revolution; the breastworks are still very perceptible.

At a stone's throw to the southwest is a curious circular hole in a flat rock, commonly called an Indian "pot-hole," but said to have been used to support a mast from which was suspended a telegraph wire to the New Jersey shore before the submarine cable was perfected.

25. *Jeffrey's Hook*, now known as Fort Washington Point, was the place from which sunken ships and chains were suspended across the Hudson to check the British fleet. Here Washington crossed to *Fort Lee*, which is situated nearly opposite on the Palisades.

Take a path south to the Fort Washington railroad station where trains may be taken to 30th Street; or one may ascend "Depot Lane" and go east to Amsterdam Avenue. Take Amsterdam Avenue car to Fort George.

SECTION V. FORT GEORGE AND INWOOD TO KINGSBRIDGE.

26. *Fort George*, originally "Laurel Hill," a fortification to help defend Washington Heights. The fort was taken November 16th, in the general attack on Fort Washington, the American Colonel Baxter being killed. Traces of the fort remained until 1890. See relics in the Fort George Casino.

The *Eleventh Milestone* is at "Fort Wendell." Near the north entrance of the Fort George Casino, and below the mock fortification, is a deep opening in the rock through which one could formerly go for several hundred feet. East of Amsterdam Avenue, opposite 193d Street, a breastwork with embrasures may still be seen.

Descend the hill to the *Dyckman Meadows* once owned by

a family of that name. Just north of "Sherman's Creek" is an Indian shell heap from which many relics have been unearthed. Follow "Dyckman Street" to Kingsbridge Road. At about 210th Street see

27. *The "Dyckman House,"* over 100 years old.

In a stone wall nearby, on the west side of the street, is the *12th Milestone*.

Take a lane to the right, passing a little graveyard and see

28. The "*Nagle*" or "*Century House*" (date 1736) near the Harlem, close to which ran the Post Road.

NOTE.—A side trip to the northwest end of the island near the outlet of Spuyten Duyvil Creek (the origin of the name is explained by Diedrich Knickerbocker) brings one to an old farm house built many years ago. Nearby is the "Cold Spring," frequented by both Indians and whites for hundreds of years. Just south of it is an Indian shell heap and in holes in the rocks above were discovered many Indian relics and skeletons by City Engineer Alexander Chenoweth. Part of the collection is on exhibition in the Natural History Museum. The Indian name of this locality (including Spuyten Duyvil) was "Shorackappock" or "the fire place," significant of the tribal meetings held here. It is supposed that Henry Hudson anchored off shore at the mouth of the creek and traded with the natives.

Go back to Kingsbridge Road (now called Broadway) and continue north, crossing the Ship Canal and passing

29. *Farmer's* or *Dyckman Bridge* built in the early part of the 18th Century to avoid the toll on the King's Bridge.

30. *King's Bridge* was built about 1693 by Frederick Philipse and is the oldest bridge across the Harlem.

Washington retreated across it in 1776 and it was a center of military movements during the Revolution.

Cock Hill Fort commanded it from the northern end of Manhattan and a line of forts from the mainland.

SECTION VI. KINGSBRIDGE AND VAN CORTLANDT PARK.

(Trains may be taken from the Grand Central Station or *via* the Sixth and Ninth Avenue Elevated Railroad and the Putnam County Railroad direct to Kingsbridge station.)

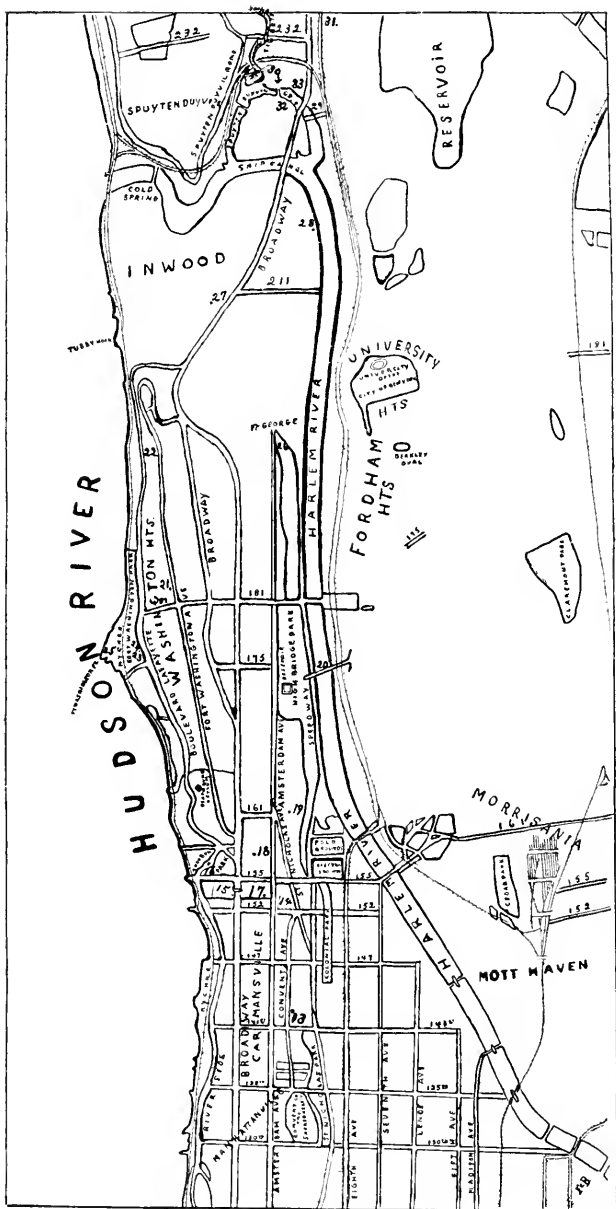
31. *Fort Independence* was on Tetar (Tetard) Hill just north of the railroad station. In 1772 it was the property of General Montgomery. On the grounds of Mr. Giles may be seen one of the eighteen cannon unearthed in 1853. Revolutionary buttons and bullets are frequently found.
32. *Papirinim*, the name of the little island at Kingsbridge, is one of several Indian names attached to this locality.
33. *The McComb House*, at the turn in Broadway, is on the site and may be a part of the ancient tavern where Washington stopped in 1776. One of its early owners, Alexander McComb, built McComb's Dam (now Central) Bridge in 1799.

Take train or follow Broadway to *Van Cortlandt Park* part of "Colendonck," later the *Philipse* or *Van Cortlandt Manor*.

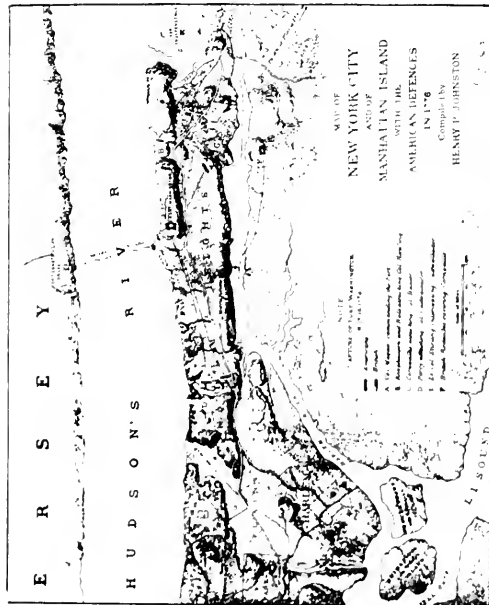
34. *Van Cortlandt Mansion*, built 1748 by Frederick Van Cortlandt and now owned by New York City. It was one of Washington's headquarters and is fitted up as a museum by the Colonial Dames. (Open daily to the public from 10 to 5.) The official guide-book contains a complete history of the house and the estate. The *old mill* was built by Philipse long before the Revolution. *Tippett's Brook* received its name from an early owner of the property.
35. *Vault Hill*, just northeast, contains the remains of the Van Cortlandt family. Here were concealed for a time the public records of New York City, and on this hill in 1781 camp fires were lighted to deceive the British before the Yorktown campaign. The neighborhood abounds in Indian relics.
36. *Indian Field* on the old "*Mic Square Road*" at Woodlawn Heights was the scene in 1778 of a battle in which a number of Stockbridge, Conn., Indians were killed, the remains of eighteen being here buried.

NOTE.—Two old trees near Riverdale Avenue are of special interest. "Washington's Chestnut," said to be 400-500 years old, is near Valentine's Lane; the "Cow Boys' Oak," near the brick school house at Hudson Park, under which many victims were hanged during the Revolution.

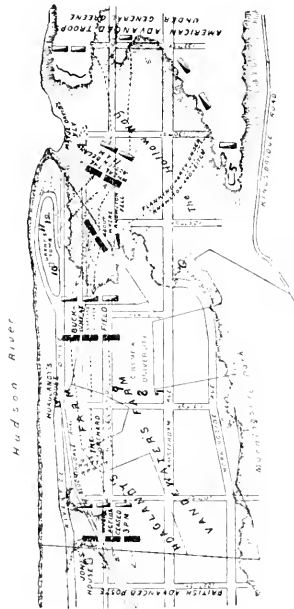
"*Font Hill*" or "Forrest's Castle," once the property of the great actor, is in the grounds of the Convent of Mt. St. Vincent.



Map No. III.—Manhattan Island, above 125th Street. Made for the City History Club of New York.



Map No. 1. Reproduced by permission from Vol. 3, "Memoirs of the Long Island Society".



PLAN OF THE BATTLE OF HARLEM HEIGHTS.

Map No. II.—Plan of the Battle of Harlem Heights. Reproduced by permission from "Historic New York," Vol. 2, published by G. P. Putnam's Sons.

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